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place it on file where it would be accessible to all. Of course it would be expensive to maintain at headquarters a sufficiently large clerical force to carry this out, but think of the gain to the individual libraries. Where is the millionaire, looking for a good use to make of his money, who will make it possible for us to try this scheme toward realization of which so many of us have long been looking?

The questionnaire is not the only way in which work is being duplicated. Look at the number of lists of books compiled by librarians. A does not know that B has compiled a good list on a subject in which A's library is interested and so he makes one himself. If he could have found out through a central bureau that B had printed such a list and could have ordered copies for his own use, he might have saved the cost of composition, proof-reading, etc.

In closing, your Committee begs leave to transmit the following suggestion from Miss Mary Frances Isom, of Portland, Oregon:

"The president of my board has just read over the questions and he says that he wishes there might be an intelligent set of questions sent out on the salary question, hours of labor, etc., and the results tabulated. That kind of information is so difficult to get either from reports or letters."

CORINNE BACON, Chairman.

SULA WAGNER.

HILLER C. WELLMAN.

**The PRESIDENT:** The discussion of the morning is one on open shelves and book losses, a subject which is of vital interest to every librarian of a free public library. When we open our parks to the public we notice that a great many people pick flowers and walk on the grass and do other things that are objectionable. The question arises at just what point these injurious actions become sufficiently important to shut up the parks. Undoubtedly they might at some point become so important; trees might be cut down by

people with axes and the grass might be entirely ruined—the park might be wrecked. If anything like that should happen, undoubtedly the park would be shut up. At just what point does the injury become so great as to warrant closing the park? There are some people, although probably they are in a minority, who think that the question of book-losses in open shelf libraries has become so serious that it has become practically necessary for us to close up our shelves. If so it is a very important fact which all of us should know, and we therefore welcome such a discussion as the one before us this morning. It will be opened by a paper by Miss Isabel Fly Lord of the Pratt Institute free library, Brooklyn, on

#### OPEN SHELVES AND THE LOSS OF BOOKS

Movements and doctrines are vague things as to their beginnings, and many a controversy has arisen in the attempt to assign accurate dates of birth to them. But in this amicable assembly it may be safe to state that the "open shelf" movement in American free public libraries comes of age at this conference. Twenty-one years ago, at the Thousand Islands, Mrs Sanders appeared before the American Library Association and told of the eminently successful experiment at Pawtucket, in allowing all users of the library to see, touch and handle for themselves the books as they stood on the shelves. The account was greeted with enthusiasm, and Mrs Sanders was praised and envied for what she was able to do in her small library in her small community, although of course, said the "large librarians," Pawtucket, Rhode Island, is one thing, and New York City is another. But presently Cleveland started bravely forth, and then free access was granted so rapidly in so many kinds of libraries that the tale would be a hard one to tell with any degree of accuracy. And not only New York City, but Greater New York, in all five of her boroughs, allows free access to all her collections of

circulating books, and in 1907 gave out to her inhabitants a grand total of 9,464,848 volumes.\*

Such a wide adoption of a library policy speaks strongly on its behalf, but is not necessarily proof of its wisdom and justice. There are still librarians, honored among us, and even more there are trustees, who not only doubt the wisdom and justice of the policy, but hold it to be totally pernicious. The public press occasionally gives wide publicity to the fearful losses of books by theft, and if, being librarians, we refrain from getting into a panic or becoming hysterical, we yet do sometimes feel a bit uneasy about some of the accusations. This paper is the result of an investigation of the actual facts of these losses of books, in order that both opponents and advocates of what we in America have agreed to call the "open shelf," may decide for themselves as to future policy and practice. It deals only with the question of free public libraries, where the conditions of use differ essentially from those of the society, club, college, university, or other institutional library. Its further limitations will appear as the different subjects are treated.

But before turning to these facts and figures let us give a few moments to the consideration of the general principle involved in throwing the shelves open to the public, and to the minor objections to this that have been at different times set forth. Such a general statement is necessary if we are at the end to draw any definite conclusion.

The public library, as an educational institution, has a different function from that of any other part of our educational system. This function approaches nearest to that of the public museum, but by its sending out volumes for home use the library has a wider and a more varied in-

fluence. Supplementary to formal education, its chief aims are two; first, to enable any member of its community to get as readily and easily as possible at any needed information that is contained in the printed page; second, to stimulate, to encourage, and sometimes to direct the knowledge and love of books. The first of these ends, the information side, is served largely, although by no means entirely, through the reference department of the library. Long before there was any consideration of free access to any other part of the library books, it was generally held necessary to have the most commonly used reference books on open shelves. The reason for this in many cases was the somewhat ignoble one of desiring to save the library attendants trouble, but the advantages were so immediately obvious that reference departments soon enlarged their open shelf collections, and the practice is now almost universal. This does not mean, of course, that all the books of large reference collections are accessible to everyone, nor is such a practice, so far as I know, anywhere advocated. In a large reference collection a great many books are rare, either in the book markets or as to library use; a great many have such a high value as to tempt the professional thief; a great many are in size, shape, style of binding, or quality of illustrations, unsuited to general indiscriminate handling. The collection that is needed for current general use is more easily watched by the reference attendants than is a circulating collection of proportionate size, and altogether the problem of open shelves in the reference department is a less serious one. It will therefore not be treated in this paper further except as losses of reference books are given in the statistical statement.

This side of imparting information is also, naturally a large part of the work of the circulating department of the library. But here the question is a different one. If the information wanted is a brief, definite answer to any question, the

\*This, it should be noted, does not include the circulation of books through the schools—so large an element with many public libraries—as in New York this is carried on by the Board of education. The issue here for 1906-1907 was 6,232,096, making the 1907 total free circulation for Greater New York certainly over fifteen and a half millions.

chances are that it will be best furnished by the reference department, but something more general and discursive, something to be studied or even to be skimmed over at home—here the circulating department must be appealed to. And then there are the people who want “collateral reading” for their studies; those who want something worth while for their enjoyment; those who vaguely want “something nice to read” to pass away the time; those who want only novels, perhaps only the new novels, know what they want, and are not always pleasant when they do not get it, and those who come seeking the inspiration to be had from the great masters of expression in words. How are all these people to be served best? As to their own preference, there is no question. The people who use a public library prefer to see the books as they stand on the shelves, to take them down and look at them, to feel free among them. To the great majority of those who use the library and perhaps to all who should be using it and are not, the card catalog is a stumbling-block. Even to one trained in the use of a catalog—which chiefly means a librarian—the card conveys nothing as to the condition, printing, or literary style of the book, and often not even the inclusiveness of its scope. This is equally true of the printed catalog, whose sole advantages over the card catalog are ease of use, portability and readiness of duplication. But how would any librarian here like to select his or her personal reading for a year from a catalog, whether printed in a book or written on cards?

To stimulate and encourage the knowledge and love of books, so I have stated the second general aim of the library. Would anything serve to that end better than the handling of books themselves? The examining and choosing is in itself an educational process, and the chances are few that the “real right book” will get to a member of the “public,” when he is not looking for a definite book, through catalog and messenger compared to his

chances when he is allowed to search and find for himself what is to him the pearl among the heap of pebbles. The very reading the titles on the backs of the books is enlightening, edifying and broadening. No one who has noted the difference in use of the same books in the same library with open and with closed shelves can hesitate as to this. In the “Library Journal” for December 1900 (25:741) Miss Mary W. Plummer gave an interesting list of such differences in the Pratt Institute free library. If Kate Douglas Wiggin’s “Children’s rights” went out 16 times from the open shelves to 9 times from the stack; and the life of Lady Burton 20 times to 7, “Silas Marner” 27 times to 12, Hamerton’s “Thoughts on art” 10 times to 4, were not people being definitely better served? And every open shelf collection shows a similar result. If figures that were fairly comparative were available it seems almost certain that the fiction percentage would be lower in the open shelf collection. Open shelves are not, indeed, as Mr S. S. Green pointed out years ago, a panacea, but surely the time is passed when we need to discuss with that curiously facetious body of English librarians known as The Pseudonyms, “whether free access is a library method or a disease.” If we cease to be our official selves for a moment, can we fail to echo Mr Putnam’s words spoken in 1891? “I cannot believe there is a librarian who has felt as a reader and would not himself be urgent for free access. The problem is one of means.”

To quote once more, the burden of proof is surely, as Mr Brett said at Atlanta, on the other side. What objections do the objectors bring? First, frequently, and in a few instances as a main objection, there is the confusion of books resulting from misplacement. Librarians differ very much in their opinions as to this, but few hold it a serious argument against allowing people to look at the books. Those who are looking for a definite book, especially if other than fiction, are best served by asking a member

of the library staff to find it. Decimal points, Cutter numbers and dummies are enough to make it well nigh impossible for the user to be sure that the book is not "in." The reader who wants a definite book is always quickest served through the catalog and a call-slip, and this can be done in an open shelf exactly as well as in a closed library. This has not always been sufficiently impressed on staff, users, or both, but it is certainly true. The only possible difficulty here is caused by misplacement on the shelves. A librarian can often find by a casual glance a book thus misplaced; but the difficulty must, of course, be guarded against by constant revision of the order of books on the shelves. In 18 of the libraries who answered the questions sent them for this paper, shelves are so rearranged daily or oftener. This means very little danger of missing the books asked for. Four of the librarians have their revision weekly, four report "continuously" but do not say how long a time it takes to revise the whole collection. Unfortunately the word "revision" used in the question proved ambiguous to some, and the statistics on the subject are not full. But they show sufficiently that libraries are guarding against this difficulty of misplacement on the shelves. Some of the English libraries have a tiny colored label on each book, a color being assigned to a class of books, an admirable means of detecting at once a blue history book that has strayed into pink sociology. The plan was tried in the Pratt Institute free library for its first small open shelf collection, and worked well, but has not as yet been applied to the much larger collection now open. It would be interesting to learn if it is used in any large American collection. I have not been able to trace one.

A second objection is to the extra wear and tear on the books. If this is induced by idle and fruitless handling, the objection is valid, but if it is the result of an educational process, the wear and tear is only part of running expenses. Of course people should be taught to handle books

carefully, but that is easy to do where books are treated with what one might almost call courtesy by the library staff, and if signal offenders among the readers are remonstrated with.

The increased cost of administration is sometimes held up as an objection, but on the other hand its decreased cost is sometimes held up as an argument for open shelves. There are apparently no figures to prove either side. We were taught early in our youth that we couldn't add oranges and apples and get a resultant sum that could be expressed in terms of either. So it is impossible to reckon cost of administration in two such different states of library life. In the first place an open shelf library increases in use more rapidly than its older brother. If there are exceptions to this rule I have never found one. Increase of use means increase in cost of administration, but increase due only to this we should be ungrateful to charge to open shelves. Otherwise how can we reckon? The time of the staff is differently spent. The majority of people—and the overwhelming majority of fiction readers—find books for themselves, so that the librarians are freer to give individual help. But the revision of shelves takes perhaps as much time as the getting of books in the old days; it is hard to tell. A number of librarians report that more time is spent under the open shelf system in assisting readers, but that this they consider a great gain. The answer from Cleveland expresses concisely the opinion evidently held in most open shelf libraries, "We believe that the same amount of time spent under the open shelf arrangement gives far better service to readers."

A further objection is to the larger amount of space required for the storage of books if readers are to have access to them. This objection is not a serious one to-day, when circulating collections are unlikely to grow to unwieldy dimensions, since branch libraries arise gradually to relieve them.

Perhaps the most serious of the minor

objections is one that has not been much regarded by librarians generally. So sure are we that our one aim in life is to serve any and every one in our community that we forget that the "public" does not always read our somewhat cabalistic signs aright. Writing in the "Library World," Mr Edward Foskett once said of the open shelf arrangement: "From a reader's point of view it is the librarian's 'I-don't-know-help-yourself-and-don't-bother-me' system." Knowing our intentions, we cry out against this as absurd, but the fact remains that it is the impression of a great many readers. And we must take people as they are, and not as they ought to be—as we interpret "ought." People with this idea fail to get the assistance they need because they think they are expected to find things for themselves, and they do not like to "trouble the young ladies." Of the majority of the libraries who were asked if they found this a difficulty, 17 find practically none and to 12 it seems slight. The attitude of helpfulness, which is that of every good library staff, is certainly the best preventive for this particular difficulty. But this attitude of helpfulness should mean, among other things, constantly reminding people in definite words that getting the book he wants to the reader is "what we are here for," and that no one should hesitate to ask for help either in finding a definite book or in solving any other library problem. The most enlightening thing a librarian can do in order to learn whether this difficulty exists in his or her own library is to take a wander-hour in the circulating collection, casually accosting those who are approachable. In the small community personal acquaintance eliminates this particular difficulty, but in the large community—not the large library, but the large community—the problem becomes a formidable one. But people will gradually come to understand the ends and aims of the library, and 20 years of open shelves will probably diminish this problem to the vanishing point.

There are other minor and sometimes unique objections but it seems hardly

worth while to answer our English brother, who solemnly proclaims that under the open shelf system "difficulty is felt in the staff doing work without being overlooked by inquisitive readers, and that encouragement is given for the staff to waste time chatting with the readers." So let us turn at last to our muttons.

When the question of open shelves was brought up at the 1877 international conference, the chief objection made was to the increased loss and mutilation of books that would be sure to follow, and here today lies the crux of the whole matter. The losses are greater. What do we lose by them?

There are two sides to this, the financial and the moral. The financial side was formerly more considered than it is now, for two reasons. First, it now appears that the money losses are seldom great; second, because it is coming to be recognized that a heavy money loss is less serious than is the moral responsibility of fostering crime in a community. If open shelves do foster crime, they are not permissible, for if an educational institution stands for anything in a community, it stands for moral betterment as much as for intellectual betterment. Either without the other leads to danger; only both together help us along the path of progress. The question, then, to be decided is whether the privilege of open shelves is a demoralizing influence in a community because it suggests or encourages theft. Does it, in other words, make thieves? If it does no more than give opportunity to those in the community who are already thieves the situation is a different one. In answering this question, the difficulty at once arises of our ignorance of the personality of those who steal our books. A rare thief is caught, and certain deductions may be made from the character of the books stolen, but these are slim premises. We must, however, do our best with them.

One word about the facts presented in this paper. They are taken from the answers to a series of questions sent to

36 libraries circulating over 200,000 volumes a year and to 12 libraries in small communities, selected as typical. Of these all but one of the larger and one of the smaller libraries answered, with a promptness and courtesy that I wish publicly to acknowledge here. The figures asked for were not easy to give, and in some cases answers were impossible, but the attempt to do as much as possible to help was general, and to the courtesy and patience of the questionnaire-besieged librarians who answered mine, is due the whole value of this paper. Six of the larger libraries were unable to send figures, because reclassifying or reorganization is under way, and one because the first complete inventory for years is now being made. One library—Cincinnati—does not believe in inventories, and does not take them. Mr Hodges says: "My objections to attempting an inventory of a large library in which the books are in active use, is based upon what I have seen in one of the large libraries in the East. In that library an attendant was employed at a salary of \$600, to go with shelflist from one department to another constantly. At the close of the year his report was to the effect that so many volumes, 150 or 200, were unaccounted for. Fully 50% of those turned up within a year, they had simply been overlooked, and that not through carelessness, but owing to the inherent difficulties in tracing misplaced books."

The Millicent library, at Fair Haven, Massachusetts, has a loss so small that it is not included in the statements given, but will be referred to separately. This leaves 36 libraries for which some figures are given.

As we all know, different libraries keep their records in different ways, and it is hard to make comparisons. But the most just method of stating loss is in percentages, both to the issue of books for home use, and to the number of volumes in the library. If a library circulating 30,000 volumes a year loses 3 books, one circulating 300,000 volumes can lose 30 books

without any real increase. Each library loses one volume for every 10,000 sent out to users. And if the library losing 3 books has 6,000 volumes, and the one losing 30 has 60,000 volumes, the loss per volume of stock is the same—one in every 2000 volumes. The losses stated in this paper, therefore, are given in such percentages, and no figures are given of the actual number of books lost in a given library. Nor, for reasons that will be clear to all, are the names of individual libraries given, except in those cases where by stating local conditions some light on the problem may be gained. But there is no question of rivalry between libraries; the only use of comparison is to enable us to find common factors that can be eliminated, and so to simplify our calculations as to future practice.

On the subject of mutilation the figures are most unsatisfactory. The general report is that mutilation is heaviest in unbound magazines and newspapers—certainly not a question of open shelves. Bound volumes of magazines suffer also, and reference books. Art books are especially reported and the finer illustrated books of this sort are usually kept on closed or guarded shelves. In a few cases an epidemic of mutilation has been traced to an individual, and in both Wilmington and Hartford, the individual was discovered and punished by imprisonment. Aside from these two libraries none reports serious loss in this way except Los Angeles, where the damage for a single year (in a supposedly closed shelf library) is estimated at \$1000. Mutilation in the mass of circulating books seems to be about the same for open shelf as for closed shelf libraries, as any cutting or marking is done away from the library. In several places the marking of pictorial or verse scrap or note-books required in the public schools has led to mutilation, and here the cooperation of the school authorities should certainly prevent a continuance of the practice. After the initial difficulty of catching the delinquent there comes usually a further difficulty in con-

vincing him or her that the matter is serious. The mere payment of a money fine—say the cost of the book—is an insufficient punishment. Every member of the general public should be made to realize the seriousness of the offense. Here, as with theft, to be dealt with later, a prosecution is the best preventive of future difficulties.

Let us consider now the question of theft, as to which we have fuller data. From these 36 libraries what can we find as to the personality of those who steal the books? The question of the children naturally comes to mind first, and this, from the point of view of "cultivating criminals" is a very important question. Here the figures are unfortunately unsatisfactory, because so many libraries report either losses or circulation as a whole and given, the percentage of loss in the children's rooms. But so far as they are given, the percentage of loss in the children's room in proportion to circulation runs a little higher than that in the adult department, and in proportion to the number of volumes in the collection runs yet higher. But all the books thus taken are not stolen in any but a strained interpretation of that term. Everyone who has had to deal with children "in the mass" knows that a child is above all suggestible, and that often he takes "a library" because other children are doing the same thing. But to every children's room in any large community there comes many a child untrained in the use of the room who, seeing other children taking books home, quite innocently takes a book or two himself and walks proudly off without any sense of having done wrong. And of course there is no reason why he should feel guilty. Later, however, he probably discovers that he should not have taken a book in this way, and he usually becomes terrified for fear of "the cop" whose services his playmates are so ready to promise. He may sneak the book back and leave it on a table, and he often does. Or he may hide or destroy it. Occasionally he comes to the library and explains, sometimes accom-

panied by a troubled parent. Every children's librarian knows that many books are taken this way in error, and that if the children have not intended harm in the beginning and do not repeat the offense, then the child is not seriously harmed. Also there are the children, almost invariably boys, who steal for pure prestige. The leader of a set of boys is expected to display prowess, and "doing" the library is hard enough to win this particular kind of laurels. This is not a habit to be either commended, recommended, or even tolerated, but it is a fact that a boy may do a deed of daring-do of this variety without any serious injury to his moral character. Occasionally he repents later. The Dayton public library, a couple of years ago, had a package of books returned with a note from a young man, saying that several years before he and some other boys said, "Let's go down to the Library and steal books." His conscience awoke later, and the books were returned, but the very way his note was worded is significant.

But let us inquire a little more closely into the losses as they occur. The actual figures for the Pratt Institute free library will serve to show what kind of losses occur in a children's room in the most difficult of all communities—a section of a great city whose population is always shifting and which has no real claim to the name of community. It is impossible to know personally all the children who come. There are continually new lots of children to assimilate, and there is very little in the life of the child elsewhere that develops any sense of responsibility. What do we do in the children's room? There are at any one time over 2000 children who actually use the room. They come freely, go to the shelves for their own books, browse all they like, and are taught respect for books so far as the librarians of the room can do this. During the five years ending July 1907, there were, at a very moderate estimate, 5000 children who used the room. There were given out for home use 165,860 volumes, and at the taking of inventory for these



five years there were 196 volumes missing. Of these many are sure to reappear, as we know from the experience of previous years, but let us take the figures as they are. This loss is for five years, so that the average yearly loss was a little over 37 volumes. That is a small number to be divided among 2000 children, even though every book was deliberately taken, which we are certain is not the case. Of the 196, 26 disappeared from the reference shelves. These were nice bright new copies of such attractive books as the Lang fairy tales, and they were too great a temptation, apparently, and also, owing to the conditions of the room, were shelved in a corner rather difficult to keep under observation. Moreover, some of the children seem to have a curious idea that the books in that corner are not a real part of the library, and because they cannot take them out regularly, they take them "for keeps" when they would not do this with a book obtainable on a membership card. Here seemed a place where extra guarding was needed, and glass doors were therefore placed on the attractive case about the time the last inventory was completed. These are not locked, but a little sign says, "If you would like to read any of the books in this case, ask at the desk. Do not take any of the books without asking." In the year since those glass doors were put up we have not lost a book from this case, so that we feel that our problem is practically solved for the children's reference collection. The average loss per year from the circulating collection was 32. Does that indicate a large number of thieves among 2000 children? And we feel quite sure that some books have gone to children not registered at all, as in one or two cases we have traced or caught such children. Of the 196 volumes total loss 29 were little books, easy to slip into bag or pocket. Librarians generally report this difficulty, and there seems reason to keep the "Peter Rabbit" books and their like in a special case, where they can be guarded. But with a loss like this

stated, who would feel justified in barring the children from the shelves, and depriving them of the pleasure, the privilege and the education of contact with books? Are we training thieves, or training children, who naturally have little sense of mine and thine, to respect community property?

It should be clearly understood that the percentage of loss is greater in the Pratt Institute free library, both in relation to circulation and to number of volumes, than it is in most libraries. This we attribute to our difficult community—or non-community—but the fact means that our case is worse than the usual one. And yet we cannot feel it *very* bad!

There is a question here as to fines. How many children take books in this illegitimate way because their cards are held for non-payment of fines? In the last report of the Boston public library, Mr Wadlin deals with this subject, and points out clearly how the "permanent fine" may encourage theft when a more elastic rule permits the resumption of the card after a period of non-use. The new Boston rule in the case of children under 16 cancels all fines for overdue books at the end of six months.

Mr Wadlin says:

"Since the change in the rule, many children who had lost the use of cards through the non-payment of fines have reclaimed them. At one large Branch, 115 cards were thus re-issued within a single month. The unpaid fines on these amounted to \$36.09, but much of this would probably never have been paid. In this one instance there were 115 young persons deprived of the home use of books without limit, unless they yielded to the temptation to obtain them irregularly from the open shelves."

On the other side it must be said that when we exact from the children a definite pledge, and then allow them to break it, we are not helping in their moral education. If a period of six months non-use of a card is to be held as an equivalent to any fine that may be incurred, this should be clearly stated to the children when they "join the library."

But time lacks to consider the children longer. How do their fathers and mothers, elder sisters and brothers, behave when they are presented with the freedom of the library? As has already been stated, they do not make way with as many books, in proportion to circulation and collection, as the children do. And in the figures of loss I am about to give the percentage is too high for the older people, since, as has already been said, a number of libraries do not keep separate statistics of loss, and the figures here given are for the total loss, the total circulation, and the total number of volumes in the library. Reference collections and losses are included, but not the figures of reference use. A separation of the figures for the three classes of reference books, children's books and adult circulating collection is highly desirable, but is not, with the statistics at hand, practical.

The danger of loss, as I have already hinted, depends not on the size of the library, but on the size of the community. The American habit of "moving"—changing from one habitation to another—seems to increase in a geometrical ratio as a city grows in numbers. This, together with the impossibility of any share in the civic life by the great mass of the inhabitants, tends to diminish the sense of civic responsibility, on the part of the individual. Indeed, in the great city there is very little, if anything, to foster this feeling. The library, dealing with the individuals thus deprived of one of the great benefits of a social form of living, has not, in the large community, the advantage of personal acquaintance with all its users. For these reasons one would expect the library losses to increase as the community grows in size, and such a result would be a very comfortable basis for consideration of our problem. Such a result was what the compiler of this paper expected. But such expectations were entirely defeated. The range of loss, expressed in percentages, varies in an extraordinary way. Let me present the percentage of loss to circulation in four

groups, according to the size of the community, and dividing each group into libraries with open shelves, and those with closed shelves, or with a very restricted number of books accessible. The figures for open shelf libraries include the books for children, but those for closed shelf or restricted libraries are for the adult collections only, unless otherwise stated. So that the open shelf figures run a little higher than they actually are for adults.

It is not always easy to know whether to call a library "open" or "closed", but the decision has been made as carefully as possible on the basis of free access to the bulk of the circulating collection.

The figures for population are taken from the Special report of the U. S. Bureau of census: Statistics of cities, 1905, published in 1907. The figures of loss are given in the order of the size of the community, not of the library, and are the percentages of loss to the circulation of the library.

1 Cities of over 300,000

a Open shelf libraries, losses are as follows:

.09%	.15%	.09%	.17%	.17%	.18%
.07%	.39%	.3%	(children's room only)		

b Closed shelf libraries, and those with small accessible collections. Losses:

.03%	.09%	.01%	.06%	(includes children's books)	
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2 Cities over 100,000 and under 300,000

a Open shelf libraries. Losses:

.16%	.33%	1.34%	.42%	.38%	.08%
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b Closed shelf libraries, and those with small accessible collections. Losses:

.09%	.03%	.002%	.53%	.01%
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3 Cities over 25,000 and under 100,000

a Open shelf libraries. Losses:

.48%	.17%	.39%	.08%	.15%	.07%	.06%
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b Library with very small open shelf collection. Losses: .05% (includes children's room)

4 Small communities (under 25,000)

All open shelf libraries. Losses:

.09%	.09%	.002%	.04%	and one practically nothing.	
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The loss, then, in cities of over 300,000 ranges, in open shelf libraries, from 7 books in every 10,000 circulated to 39 books for every 10,000 circulated. The largest cities vary from 9 to 17 in every 10,000 circulated. In the closed shelf libraries of this group the loss ranges from 1 to 9 volumes in every 10,000 circulated. The average is much steadier here.

In cities between 100,000 to 300,000 the open shelf libraries lose from eight to 42 in every 10,000. Denver in its period of open shelves lost 134 volumes to every 10,000, and is stated separately, as the loss there was unusual and, so far as I know, the largest proportionate loss sustained by any library. In the closed shelf libraries of the same group the loss ranges from 2 in every 100,000, which is the proud record of Fall River, to 53 in every 10,000, a larger loss than that of any open shelf library to-day, though not equaling that of Denver as stated.

In the third group of cities from 25,000 to 100,000 the open-shelf loss ranges from six to 48 in every ten thousand. In the closed shelf library of this group the loss, including that of the children's room, is five in every 10,000.

In the last group of small communities (under 25,000) the loss ranges from Fairhaven's statement that perhaps two books are definitely missing, but they expect to find them, through Gloversville's loss of two to every 100,000 circulated up to nine in every 10,000. There are no closed shelf libraries in this group.

Setting aside the case of Denver, which seems to have suffered a regular raid, and whose shelves have consequently been closed for five years now, the heaviest loss is in a library with closed shelves. This is at Los Angeles, where the conditions of the building are difficult, and where, to quote Mr Lummis, "the closing was very simple, by notices and a cord about head high. This keeps out good patrons, but does not keep out thieves, who dodge into the stacks and tuck books under their coats." It seems doubtful, under the circumstances, if Los Angeles can be con-

sidered an argument on either side of the question.

Aside from Los Angeles' loss the heaviest losses occur in the third group of cities (48 and 39 in every 10,000) in the second group (42, 38 and 33 in every 10,000) and in the first group, but barely within it (39 in every 10,000). Dropping below the lowest loss here of 38 in every 10,000, we find the next figure 18 in every 10,000. There must surely be something in the local conditions to explain some of this group of six large losses. The size of the community does not explain it, for the population figures range from about 80,000 to over 300,000. What other explanation can be given? In at least three of the libraries the building is a great difficulty, proper guarding being impossible. New Haven has one of these heavy losses, and is soon to have a building that will lessen losses, if expectations are fulfilled. Wilmington has one and hopes for a better building some day. The losses in two of the libraries depend somewhat on an unusual number of irresponsible users, a local condition hard to combat. It would require a detailed study of losses and conditions to give reasons in full. If the librarians of these collections could give an analysis of losses it would be of very great value to all libraries.

A statement of the mean loss, in open shelf libraries, is especially valuable in view of the few libraries with exceptionally high losses. In the first group the mean loss is 17 in every 10,000 circulated; in the second group (omitting Denver) the mean is 33; in the third group it is 15; in the last group 4. Taking the first, second and third groups the losses in the six libraries having the high losses range from 33 to 48 in every 10,000 circulated; seven range from six to nine in their losses; and the central group of seven ranges from 15 to 18. It would seem that as near as we can come to a deduction from these varying figures would be to take this central group, the mean loss of which is 17 in every 10,000 circulated.

It so happens—and I give you my word

that I had no hand in making it happen—that this is the loss in the last inventory of the Pratt Institute free library, and an analysis of this loss may give us some interesting facts. These will be compared with the loss by classes in other libraries, so far as those figures are obtainable. We are quite sure, by the way, that the list of books missing at this inventory will be materially reduced by the volumes found during the inventory now in progress, so that our final loss will be distinctly under that noted now. But there is no reason to suppose that the books thus discovered will be in one class more than in another, so that the losses as now given should still be significant. The inventory of the children's room of the Pratt Institute free library has already been given in some detail. The inventory of the rest of the library was taken at the same time—the two months and a half ending July 31, 1907—but covered only one year and a half. During this time the total recorded number of persons using the reference departments (excluding the children's room) of the Library was 56,875. The number of reference books missing was thirty. Of these five volumes were from the general reference library, eight from the periodical sets, four from the collection of U. S. government documents, six from the Art reference room, and seven from the Applied science reference room. We have reason to believe that six of this last seven went to one person, as they were books on allied subjects and disappeared within a few days. Also, at the time they disappeared the room was not properly guarded. Of the periodicals three volumes were rare and were probably taken for their money value. They should never have been left on open shelves. None of the other volumes were of much money value, and three were cheap text-books. The loss is one volume to about every 1900 people using the departments.

The loss for the rest of the library was 418 volumes. The circulation during this period was 201,487. The percentage of loss to the circulation in the adult collection

is thus about twenty to every ten thousand circulated. Our circulating collection is a parallel one, with roughly 35,000 volumes on the open shelves and 25,000 in the closed stack. The volumes lost from the open shelves were 358, or 18 to every 10,000 circulation from the shelves; those from the closed shelves 60, or at the rate of 68 for every 10,000 of the circulation. Why the loss was so much heavier from the closed portion of the library we are unable to guess, but it is probable that a greater portion of these missing volumes will be found in the inventory now taking, and of course the closed shelf books are in the open shelf room in the course of being issued and returned.

The detailed loss is as follows:

	Vols.
Fiction	119
000	6
100	14
200	12
300	20
400	10
500	30
600	60
700	22
800	63
900	19
Biography	5
Foreign (in closed stack)	38
	<hr/> 418

But if stated in the order of percentage of circulation in each class, the importance of losses shifts at once. The highest falls then in philology (400), where the loss was at the rate of 104 for every 10,000 circulated. That this is no unusual difficulty is sufficiently proved by the fact that of the 24 libraries giving detailed figures of loss the largest number—seven—had the heaviest proportionate number in this class. Yet one library has its lightest loss here. Scientific and technical science follow, the loss in pure science (500) being at the rate of 60 for every 10,000 sent out, and that in applied science (600) 58. Seven of the 24 other libraries also have their heaviest proportionate loss in these two classes,

while two libraries have their lightest here, and in two no books were lost in pure science. Fourteen out of the 24 libraries lose, most in 400-600. Literature (800) comes next, with a loss of 38. One library has its heaviest loss here, and two their lightest. The fine arts (700) follow close with 36, and no library finds this the heaviest, while one finds it lightest. General works (000, and on closed shelves) lose 34, and in four of the 24 libraries show the heaviest loss. In four also the loss is lightest here, and in nine libraries there is no loss at all in this class. Religion follows with 33, and in two libraries the loss is heaviest here, in one it is lightest, and in three there is no loss at all. Philosophy shows a loss at the rate of 28 volumes to every 10,000 circulated, and in two libraries shows the largest proportionate loss, in two the lightest, and in three no loss. Sociology (300) loses 24, and proves the most serious loser in one library, the lightest in another, and no loser in two. History (900 except 910) offers a loss of 21, and in no library shows the most serious loss, while in one it is the lightest and in two there is no loss. Travel (910) loses 15 and again is in no library the chief loser, in one is the lightest loser, and in three has no loss. Biography loses 13, and in no library is the heaviest loser, in two is the lightest and in two loses nothing. Fiction, last in this record, if in no other, loses only 11 to every 10,000, and in no library shows the greatest proportionate loss, in seven shows the lightest and in none is without loss.

Of all the books lost in the Pratt Institute free library, only 12 disappeared from the "Books for younger readers", which speaks well for the children.

The heavy loss in philology in proportion to use, may surprise some librarians, but not many. This loss was all but one in text-books, two in English, one in German, three in Latin, one in Greek, and one in Hebrew. We have decided to guard such books by placing them in the closed stack, as there is no particular advantage in having them on the open shelves. A

definite book can be had quite as quickly from the closed shelves and a "good book to help in Latin" can be chosen by the librarian, or the volumes in—never many—can all be brought to the inquirer. A notice at the shelves calls attention to the fact that text-books are kept in a special place and can be had on request. No surprise may be expected at the large loss in scientific and technical books, but here removal from the open shelves would defeat our ends. The "technical man" is not so well served by any other method as by free access, and we have not removed from the open shelves any books except "pocket books", which have always been on the closed shelves. The supplying of technical books in any abundance is a comparatively new development, and until that particular "public" is educated, we must expect loss. Librarians, answering from general impressions, were almost unanimous in reporting technical books a difficulty, and "school text books" came a close second. A special precaution against theft in the technical books is reported from the Carnegie library of Atlanta, where the library stamp is used freely throughout the book. Drexel Institute is also trying this method, but in both cases it is too early to learn whether this will be a deterrent. The character of the technical books stolen shows clearly that most are taken for personal use rather than for sale, and it seems likely that a man would hesitate to have in his possession illegally a volume bearing the name of the Blank public library on almost every page. Time will tell if this is an advisable method.

Of the 30 books in pure science lost by the Pratt Institute free library, seven were in mathematics of high school or college grade—standard books in algebra, geometry and trigonometry. Such books are now treated like the language text-books, and may be had only by being asked for. The rest of the loss in science runs through almost every number of the classification. In applied science four out of the 60 lost went to those interested in

health and hygiene, five to those attracted by some branch of domestic science, and eight to those drawn by typewriting and stenography. The immediate vicinity of a school of commerce has probably helped in this last item, and we now keep books of this class on special shelves, accessible on request, but not otherwise. The literature loss is heavy—63. Of this 18 volumes were poetry, 12 were drama, and 18 were texts or translations of the Latin and Greek classics. This last class of books has now been treated like other school books and put on the closed shelves. A number of the other books were those used in the schools. In the general class of fine arts the loss is large in books of games and sports, nine out of the 22 missing volumes belonging here. Photography, which is reported by several libraries as a heavy loser, is responsible for four more volumes, music for two, so that only seven are kept to art, strictly speaking. The loss in religion is a sad one—the fifth in order of seriousness. It is the common courteous habit of librarians to lay the loss in religious books, which is everywhere a comparatively high one, to the absent-mindedness of the clergy and clerical students. Sunday school teachers are probably responsible for some of it. But some is hard to explain. Of twelve volumes lost five were volumes of the Temple Bible! But the strangest loss of all was a volume of Lyman Abbott's "Family worship". The Bible one might be forced to get, by cruel school or college, and one might conceivably save 20 cents by stealing a more attractive edition than one could buy for that sum. But how could one steal a volume of family prayers to use? And why steal them if *not* to use? Either question seems unanswerable. In philosophy the loss crowds that in religion close, and is largely of books useful to the student, though the "Twentieth century fortune teller" creeps in here by permission of the Decimal classification, and the "Secret of a good memory" does the same. Would that the latter might cause its user to re-

member to bring it back! Not a title is missing in ethics, which is a hopeful fact, but Podmore's "Modern spiritualism", in two volumes, is gone, and is the most costly book lost.

In sociology education claims eight of the 20 volumes missing and of those four are kindergarten books. Two are legal, three are on "how to behave"—and do not go quite far enough in their instructions, evidently—and two are volumes of fairy tales, which we keep separate in 398.2 and 398.4.

In history the loss is largely in books useful to college and high school students, and in travel the range is from the Adirondacks to the West, over to Siberia, Russia and Syria.

In biography Jacob Abbott comes to the front again, with "David Crockett", Harrison's "Oliver Cromwell" makes one smile a bit at the short shrift its subject would have given to a book thief if he were running a library. Maimon's "Autobiography" is a curious loss, and the other two volumes went from the closed shelves.

The fiction losses range far and wide, and there are only a few that one finds special reason for. Two copies of Chateaubriand's "Atala" points to a study of French, and the need of a "trot", and perhaps Balzac's "Magic skin", Daudet's "La Belle Nivernaise" and Lamartine's "Fior d'Aliza" went in the same direction.

The percentage of loss to the number of volumes in the library is, of course, higher than that to the circulation, as the latter is always the larger figure. But the significance of the figure is not so great. It is natural that the loss from a collection of 30,000 should be for the library with a circulation of 200,000 twice what it is for the library of 100,000. And circulation varies enormously in proportionate relation to size. The variation in the number of books in the reference collections of the library makes some libraries appear as having a comparatively small circulation, when if the figures for the library were given for the circulating collection alone, this would not be the case. But as many libraries

could not give the separate figures, the percentages are here computed, as were those to the circulation, of total loss to stock. The losses then range from 271 volumes to every 10,000—the exceptional record of Los Angeles—to four volumes of every 100,000, the record of Fall River. In the group of cities of over 300,000 inhabitants the range in loss from the open shelf libraries is from 180 volumes to 23 out of every 10,000, with a mean of 88. In the closed shelf libraries of this group the loss ranges from 38 in every 10,000 to 15 in every 100,000. In the second group the open shelf libraries lose from 271 to 15 volumes with a mean of 61, and in the closed shelf libraries from 31 in every 10,000 to 4 in every 100,000.

In the third group—cities between 60,000 and 100,000—the open shelf loss is from 124 to 16 in every 10,000, with a mean of 25, while the closed shelf library lost only 106 out of every 100,000, or a little over 10 per 100,000.

In the last group of libraries in small communities, the loss ranges from the zero of Fairhaven, through 78 to every 100,000 of Gloversville, to 13, 41 and 65. As I have already stated, these figures do not seem to me significant as compared with those of percentage of loss to use. If counted as wear and tear losses, they would not be considered heavy. The discarding in the Pratt Institute free library for two years shows a loss in this direction of 43 in every 10,000, and many libraries would doubtless show more.

Now, after this long excursion, we come back to our old question: Who took these books? And first, were they taken for sale? There is no reason to suppose so. Only an occasional volume of those missing has money value enough to make it pay to steal it, so to speak, and there are many volumes of good money value safe on the shelves. One stealing to sell would be likely to keep the habit up, and his depredations would probably show in some noticeable way. Also, such a thief is more likely to get caught, because his spoils are traceable if sold. The answers obtained

from the questionnaire show little loss of this sort. A few libraries have had notable epidemics of stealing, and have usually caught the culprit. Scranton lost \$150 of books from the reference room within a few months, and the depredations ceased suddenly before the thief or thieves could be detected. New Haven recovered 80 volumes taken by one man; Buffalo recovered 35 volumes of fiction from the estate of one woman; Utica recovered through the police 19 books on metallurgy taken by a man engaged in the manufacture of counterfeit money; Kansas City lost all books on South American history in a brief period; and several branches of the New York public library have suffered from epidemics, believed to be the work of one person or one group. But generally the loss is steady and varied. A daily inventory of Yiddish—in which the loss is heavy—was kept for a time in the New York public library, and this shows the loss to be fairly regular.

In order to guard against the stealing of books to sell, some libraries warn all second-hand dealers in their vicinity, more expect the dealers to return such books. But the number of books thus returned is insignificant in most cases. Somerville once recovered several hundred, stolen by one thief. Kansas City has thus regained 100, Cleveland gets back from 25 to 50 a year; New York perhaps 25 a year, and other libraries few or none. Cincinnati's experience seems typical. Mr Hodges says: "Your question seems to me especially pertinent. We do keep in touch with second-hand book dealers, in close touch with them, and it does not happen oftener than once a year that our books are offered to these dealers. There is no money in stealing books from a public library, there is no temptation for fairly intelligent people to steal them; the books are taken by ignorant persons and by children. When the books are taken by children, they soon turn up at the public schools, or they are thrown away in the streets. Reports of such stealings come to us perhaps once in four or five months."

If the books are not taken for sale, but for use, who takes them? Students of all kinds are undoubtedly the chief sinners. High school students, college students, university students, those studying music, a trade and—in some places a formidably large number—those who are preparing for civil service examinations. Beyond this it seems hard to go. That an individual should steal in order to read a copy of "Cranford" or a volume of Marion Crawford, is difficult to believe, yet there seems no doubt that it is true.

But another question arises at once. How many individuals took those 418 volumes? That is an unanswerable question, but is it not reasonable to suppose that more than one volume went to an individual? Would an average of five a year be too great to allow to the man or woman who takes one? If not, then some 83 people out of the 13,000 who were using the department abused the privilege of the open shelf. I feel confident that the number was even smaller, but let it stand at that. If 83 people out of 13,000 are thieves—granting that all stole to keep, and consciously, which is granting altogether too much—is that a large proportion of people of a loose moral sense to expect in a community? Is there reason to suppose any one of the 83 was made a thief by the freedom granted in the library? And are the 12,917 others to be kept away from the shelves because of the moral obliquity of the 83?

One word about the accuracy of all figures of loss. A certain proportion of the volumes missing in a given inventory are sure to reappear, and all the figures here given are, with the exception of those for Denver, for the last library inventory, so that there has not been time to clear up the scores, and the figures here given are too large. The 1905 inventory of the Pratt Institute free library was taken a year and a half before the last (1907) inventory, and at the time of the latter, 50 of the 120 volumes reported missing in 1905 reappeared. Fourteen libraries report the number of volumes missing in their next to the last inventory, and the

number found since. The figures vary from four volumes found out of 225 missing to 50 found out of 83. But all but two libraries recovered at least one tenth of the missing volumes, and most of them many more.

Then a certain amount should be allowed for error. The librarians who answered this set of questions seemed almost unanimous in the opinion that it is impossible that a mistake should be made in discarding, but it would seem more reasonable to put the matter as Miss Burdick of the Jersey City free public library put it in answering the question regarding this: "Not until the millenium comes and perfect people are the rule, will there be a perfect shelf-reading." The proportion of loss due to errors in the library is undoubtedly very small, but it is a mickle to subtract from the muckle of the whole loss. Some libraries also report as missing in inventory the books lost through mistakes in charging. It is true that people should return their books in any case, but it is equally true that some people forget unless reminded by the library of the fact that a book is charged to them.

The fact that now and then some one returns a book that had not been charged with profound apologies indicates that a certain number of books are lost in this way. The people who do this are the absent-minded people, who may easily forget all about the book or books taken, leave them in a car, bury them in bookcases, or lend them to friends. We have all had the experience of the perfectly honest person who disavows, sometimes in sorrow, sometimes in anger, ever having had a given book from the library, and yet later appears shamefaced to return it, still not remembering ever taking it or having it. A few of our books go to such people, and certainly do not corrupt their morals. It may be claimed that these individuals could not get the books under the closed shelf system, but in any library that allows any body to go to the shelves, these are likely to be the very people who ask



for, get, and truly appreciate the privilege! There are also people who take books without charging—either because of a forgotten library card, a card held for some reason, or in order to avoid the return at the usual time limit—but who intend to return the books. Many times they do return them; pretty certainly some times they do not.

With all possible deductions, however, the open shelf losses as a rule are a good bit heavier than those in the closed shelf libraries. Do they increase with years? That is hard to say, as it is hard also to get figures to compare the losses under the two methods of a library that has been both closed and open. Let us use what facts we have. The Newark free public library figures are the fullest that have been given me, and they are of great interest. In the years from 1890 to 1894 the shelves were closed, and the loss in successive years ranged as follows: 8 to every 100,000 circulated, 12, 16, 15 to every 100,000. From 1894 to 1900 all the books except fiction were on open shelves. The losses ran as follows: 15 in every 100,000, 13, 13, 26. Since 1900 the library has been entirely open shelf, and its losses have gradually risen as follows, 44 in every 100,000, 65 in every 100,000, 11 in every 10,000, 16 in every 10,000. The Pratt Institute free library lost in 1904, from closed shelves, three volumes in every 10,000, in 1905, with all closed but 3,000 volumes, eight out of every 10,000 and in 1907, with the main part of the circulating collection open, seventeen out of every 10,000. Springfield, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island, report losses decreasing, although still considerable. The 51st annual report of the Public library of Brookline, Massachusetts, for the year ending January 31, 1908, gives the loss and circulation from 1898 to 1907. This shows a variation in loss from year to year as follows: (chronologically) 7 in every 10,000, eight, eight, three, three, eight, six, five, five, five. In no library for which figures are given has the advance been rapid.

But when all has been said as to the smallness of loss, and however much we may be convinced that this is no serious bar to opening the shelves, yet there remains with us the responsibility of doing what we can to lessen the losses. And especially is this true in the larger communities. Nine volumes for every 10,000 circulated is not an appalling loss, but if the circulation rises to a certain point, the difference in degree becomes one in kind. For multiplying by 100 gives a circulation of 1,000,000, and a loss of 900, and even dividing by the five I have judged to be fair gives us 180 persons who have stolen books from the public library. And a little more multiplying and a few years of fresh accessions increase this number until it is an alarming one.

What preventives can we adopt, then, and what precautions can we take? The first thing that comes to mind as to this is the accusation our English brother librarians make, that we do not safeguard our access. And when we turn to look at British conditions, we certainly find them different from ours. The battle is still on there, and the victory for the open shelf is by no means as nearly decided as here. And yet this problem of loss is almost negligible with them. Open shelves there are barely 15 years old, but that is quite long enough to test the question of loss. What do we find there? Croydon losing nine books in a year, out of a collection of 38,306 and with an issue of 290,000 volumes, and other libraries with like tales to relate. What American *closed* shelf library would not be proud of this record? And the Englishmen say the smallness of loss is due to *safeguarded* open access. Is it? I wish I might think so, but I fear there are other reasons. Safeguarding means (a) having charging desk by the single exit; (b) having a turnstile; (c) the requiring a library membership card for entrance to the room. The second is not universal in England, but the first and third are, so far as I am able to learn. Mr Champneys in his recent volume "Public libraries"

says: "He (the reader) can only enter the library by returning a book previously borrowed, or by showing his ticket, and can only leave it when another book has been charged and his ticket left in pledge." The last half of this sentence sounds like forcing the circulation, but it was hardly so intended, one supposes. But jesting aside, where lies the difference between English and American free access? Not in the first point, for most American libraries do have the charging desk by the single exit. Not in the second, for a good many Americans and not all the English libraries are so provided. In the third there is a distinct difference. Would the presentation of a library card for entrance prevent the losses here? Surely it would not, to any appreciable extent. It would annoy a great many people, keep out some who object to such an expression of doubt, and in no way prevent the dishonest from concealing books as at present, while regularly charging one properly presented. The difference goes deeper than charging-desks and admission tickets; it is a difference in the people themselves. The English have a higher respect for law as such than have the Americans, and they have also a keener sense of property rights. I trust no enterprising reporter will accuse me of saying that the American people are dishonest. But I am quite willing to stand for saying that they are careless both as to law and as to property.

It is not necessary to multiply instances, because we all know the carelessness as to the law to be a fact, as is natural in a country still in the pioneer stage in many ways, and with an enormous heterogeneous foreign population to assimilate. The carelessness is shown in the library as it is elsewhere. And as to property rights; well, if you lose your umbrella in London, you expect to find it; if you lose it in New York, you do not expect to. In either case you may be disappointed, but the expectation is significant. English libraries are dealing with a different public, one easier

in many ways to manage if, as we think, harder to influence. Their ways would not obviate our difficulties, as to safeguarding any more than as to indicators. We must work out our own problem for our own people.

Again, then, what can we do in prevention? In the analysis of the Pratt Institute free library losses the statement was made as to certain classes of books withdrawn from the unrestricted open shelves. This is a preventive that has been adopted in a good many libraries, and is of course to be applied according to the actual experience of the libraries in question.

At Fall River the public library, whose losses are noticeably small, turns over to the police the titles of overdue books not returned after due notice, and the police collect them. The library has a regular printed form of report to the police. The detention of a public library book thirty days after notice in writing is in Massachusetts, as in New York, and doubtless other states, a punishable offense especially provided for.

Here seems the place to note the duty of the library to get back all books taken out in the regular way. A book taken regularly and kept indefinitely is as much stolen as the book taken informally, with the added disadvantage that the delinquent knows that the library is quite well aware that he has the book. If the library fails to insist on the return of the book, how can it expect others to respect its property? It is not easy or cheap to trace people who have moved, or to hunt a peripatetic boarder or commercial traveler, but each one in possession of a book is an argument not only for the weakness of the library, but for its carelessness. Do you think the danger small? Let me give you a few figures. In one library in a large community that lost from the shelves 15 books to every 10,000 circulated, the number regularly charged to borrowers and never returned was for the same circulation, 6. That is dangerously near half as many as were lost from the shelves. In another large community the loss per 10,000 circu-

lation was, from the shelves 16, from "delinquents" five. Others range as follows, the shelf losses being given first: 38, 3; 10, 3; 9, 2; 9, 2; 6, 2. This is a question that has not been much considered, but certainly should be before the prestige of any given library is impaired by the general knowledge that it does not insist on having the law—of the library and perhaps of the state—enforced.

There is no question that the detection and punishment of theft is the very best preventive of all. The detection is not easy. A number of libraries report the employment of professional detectives at certain times, but in no case was the thief discovered. And yet this should not deter other libraries from adopting this method. As Mr Bostwick once said, a corps of detectives should be engaged, in case of need, "even if they cost the library ten times the value of the books stolen. There is more at stake in this matter than the money value of a few volumes." And for Cincinnati, Mr Hodges says: "We follow up every bit of evidence that our books are illegally in the possession of outsiders." If every library did this, losses would decrease. A concrete proof of this is a recent experience of the Queens Borough public library. Miss Hume writes:

"In the spring of 1907 we had opportunity to arrest a thief who had stolen eight or ten books from one of our branch libraries. The case was postponed several times, but we were very persistent and finally obtained a conviction. The immediate effect of this was a return to various branches throughout the borough of books which had been stolen. Some of them were on our missing list; others had not yet been missed. Some were returned at one branch by being left on the door sill in the morning—five or six came back in this way. At another branch one book was tucked away on the shelves in the children's room and found there by one of the librarians, very much soiled and used. One book was also returned by mail without any clue to the sender. These books had all, evidently, been

taken away with the intention of theft, and I think there is no doubt that the influence on those who were contemplating theft must have been prohibitive."

This very case is an excellent example of the American attitude toward a breach of the law, and an illustration of the well known fact that we would rather be kind—good natured—whatever you choose—than to be just. Miss Hume prosecuted this case against public opinion both publicly and privately expressed. Clergymen, editors, prominent men of different sorts, came and besought her not to prosecute, and are, one supposes, still unable to see why she considered it her duty as the custodian of the public library to protect its interests and to punish those who seriously injure it. If more librarians were willing to take this unpleasant task of prosecution, losses would lessen, unquestionably. The library has a serious responsibility as an educational institution, to make those who use it live up to *their* responsibilities and pay the penalty of any wrong-doing.

Those who hold the open shelf to be a pernicious institution—or doctrine—may think me arguing on their side of the question. Far from it. The library should enforce the law and exhort such of its constituency as need exhortation to the very limit of its power—but its best method of inculcating responsibility is still that of *giving* responsibility.

No better summing up of this matter occurs to me than one that was made in 1901 by a librarian to whom the question was one of theory, one who had not then done a day's work in a public library. After five years of practical experience these words are here repeated with fresh conviction, which neither losses nor other abuses of privilege have shaken:

"Since democracy has emerged as the leading governmental principle of the civilized world of to-day and to-morrow, it is an axiom that the only school for the voter is the ballot-box. It is equally true, and on reflection equally obvious, that the only way to teach people how to use the

public library is to give them the public library to use."

The PRESIDENT: The next part in the discussion will be taken by Mr E. S. Willcox, librarian of the Public library, Peoria, Ill.

Mr WILLCOX: In looking at the program, which did not come to my hands until after I arrived here yesterday, I noticed an outline which covers a large part in substance of the speaker's argument, with much of which I could agree, with a slight variation of a few words. In that outline mention is made of the difficulty of understanding a catalog. I do not think there is any difficulty about it whatever. If any person is alarmed at the term "catalog" because it sounds like "catechism" or "catamount" or "cataclysm" or anything of that sort, take them up to the catalog and in half-a-minute—man, woman or child—you can show them the use of a catalog (I am speaking of the card catalog) that will be a revelation to them. The card catalog is the key to the contents of their library and it is a revelation and a delight. I have noticed it time and time again. Little children can learn it just as well, and as frequently, and use it just as easily and often as anybody. I object, therefore, to the objection made to the catalog. And in speaking about going through a library and looking at the books, rummaging and rambling through a large library, it says "this is an education!" Now if Miss Lord will change that word "education" to "dissipation" it will suit me exactly. I would rather have my son know, master, one good book, than to fumble over a thousand any day, and you all know that too. There is one other point where she says that the great mass of library users should not be punished for the sins of the few. My opinion about that is that the great mass of library users should be helped and protected from the sins of the few that are rambling inside. In my remarks I am sorry to say that I must repeat some things that I have ex-

pressed years ago, and which some of you who are Illinoisians heard me say then. I cannot present anything newer or better than I said before.

#### Open shelves

Public library funds are a trust confided to library boards by the property owners of a city for two principal purposes, viz:

1 To diffuse general intelligence and furnish wholesome entertainment for the present generation.

2 And, no less important, to gather and preserve the accumulated experience of our race for the use not only of the present generation but of future generations also.

Formerly this second object—collecting and safely guarding for a select few—was the main thing. The great libraries of the old world were built up on this plan.

The diffusion of general intelligence, providing of wholesome entertainment, is the modern free public library idea.

In the administration of library funds neither of these objects should be slighted—they are both good—neither should be made to suffer at the expense of the other.

The public library of to-day, having its own independent and attractive home in every city and supported generously by public taxation is no longer the cheap circulating library of 36 years ago; it is a prominent public institution with possibilities of unlimited usefulness increasing in geometrical ratio from year to year, and the question I ask is: Shall the public library, owned and supported by the city, be held to the same strict accounting as are our municipal departments—police department, fire department, work house, poor farm, jail?

Shall it be managed with the same regard for its usefulness and preservation as the city exercises over its other properties and institutions, its public schools, its parks and gardens, its streets and boulevards, its museums and monuments?

The city does not permit its other fine properties to be ridden over and trampled on, to be ruthlessly robbed and wasted; there are laws and ordinances and police courts and policemen with big sticks.

It is high time to ask ourselves this question with these amazing statistics just laid before us.

It is not necessary that I should detain you with recounting them all, a few are plenty and more than enough.

One library reports \$1,000 worth of mutilation of books and periodicals, in one year—portraits, reproductions of famous pictures, choruses, arias, overtures and numerous books rendered worthless. Works of reference disappear, are stolen by the armful. Another library reports 73 works of reference stolen in a few months, another lost every book on South American history, another, 19 books on metallurgy, another, 34 Yiddish books stolen in a single month, and from annual reports we learn that the Denver public library, experimenting for three years and nine months with the open shelf lost 3978 volumes, and shut down on that folly. The school library of the same place lost in its last year 900 volumes and was then turned over to the public library.

The Boston public library lost 1693 volumes in 1905, the Providence public library 1795 volumes the same year, the Los Angeles public library 4044 a year for two years and 5062 in 1907, according to the latest report just to hand. They are at their wits' end and begin to realize that open shelf is only another name for self-slaughter. It may soothe your ruffled feelings to talk about prosecuting those book thieves relentlessly. That sounds well, but I would suggest that you follow the advice of that ancient cook book—first catch your hare. Try first to catch them.

And, again, what kind of a business would you call this that reports without a blush, of books borrowed in the regular way, but never returned nor paid for in a single year—one library, 110; another, 224; another, 246; another, 531; another,

1160; another, 2041? Cincinnati, Philadelphia and Minneapolis get off easily, they keep no records.

Now I ask in all seriousness, what business man of your acquaintance could report such amazing losses, such thefts and wanton destruction of his goods, and do it with the self-satisfied smile worn by some of our laurel-crowned chiefs in the library world?

Have we librarians no knowledge of business methods? Should not the public property entrusted to our keeping be as carefully guarded as merchants guard their goods, letting nothing pass out of our doors that is not properly charged or paid for, and, if stolen, pursued?

We hold our city officials to a strict accounting for every dollar they receive and a detailed accounting of every dollar they expend and if not done, out they go next election. Is our accountability less, is our bookkeeping more difficult? I happen to know a little about both and I assure you it is not.

Now, to what shall we attribute this scandalous waste of public property of which I have spoken, and the half has not been told? Nine tenths of it, I may almost say, ninety-nine hundredths of it is due to the open shelf craze that struck this country some 12 or 15 years ago. It was an east wind that did it. We of the west know a cyclone when we see it coming; it may lift us off our feet for a moment, but we soon come back to terra firma as Denver did and Los Angeles is doing. Is it any wonder if a great library, thrown wide open to the handling and pawing of crowds ignorant of books or of what they want, is soon "thumbed out of existence," as our friend John Thomson, of Philadelphia, wittily puts it in his latest annual report and he makes a piteous appeal for a larger appropriation to replace these books "thumbed out of existence." I, myself, am really fond of the bright-eyed, curious gypsy folk, but not among my chickens. As to the value of an education to be had from a bowing acquaintance with the backs of books, I

cannot speak from personal knowledge. What little education I got in school and college was not won that way.

And here permit me to say, that while I question the wisdom of one thing advocated by some of our librarians, none the less I do admire a hundred other things they have done and are doing so well.

The open shelf means removing all barriers and throwing all doors wide open to 50,000 or 150,000 carefully selected books and inviting everybody in to help himself.

Applied, for illustration, to a dry goods store it would mean, "Here are our choicest goods on these well arranged shelves—all the latest styles and qualities with prices to suit everybody—step behind the counter, please, pull down what strikes your fancy, spread them open, feel their extra fine quality and make your choice." Or, go to your bank and ask for \$100. The paying teller points to the trays of gold and silver inside and asks you to be so good as to walk right in and help yourself, only please leave your check for the amount taken as you pass out and your bank will go out of business by 3 o'clock P. M.

In the small country libraries of 2,000, 5,000 or more volumes, with, perhaps, a single assistant to the librarian, all the books in plain view and everybody well known, this method was followed of necessity from the first, and some books were stolen even then, for alas, it cannot be denied that we have book thieves with us always. But now with city libraries of 50,000, 100,000, 200,000 volumes, great and priceless, long accumulated collections, with ampler rooms and trained assistants, it is no longer necessary to take such chances of loss. We have printed catalogs, card catalogs, lists and bulletins, and, especially, a body of intelligent assistants familiar with the location and contents of every book in the library, that is, until ransacked by a horde of Goths and Vandals. We no longer need to offer opportunities for thieving, still less practically connive at it as some of our honored librarians have come very near doing in

their published statements. Note. I do not say the open shelf makes thieves, they are made already in plenty, watching for opportunities. Ask your merchants about their experience.

"Only 300, 500, 900 volumes dissappeared last year, but this was a small matter hardly equal to the salary of one assistant, not worth mentioning." Does this not sound like the genial voice of our friend, Harold Skimpole?

"Are you arrested for much, sir," I inquire of Mr. Skimpole?

My dear Miss Summerson," said he, shaking his head pleasantly, "I don't know. Some pounds, half shillings and half pence, I think were mentioned." "It's twenty-four pounds, sixteen and seven pence ha' penny," observed the stranger, "that's wot it is!" "And it sounds, somehow it sounds" said Mr Skimpole, "like a small sum."

In an impassioned appeal for the open shelf by a prominent librarian at the Atlanta conference, nine years ago, he exclaimed, "The mere loss of \$300 or \$400 worth of books a year should not be allowed to stand in the way of the open shelf system for a single minute."

The result of these teachings by such influential men of our Association is shown to-day after 12 years' experience, in redoubled losses by theft and mutilation, not only in their own libraries, but in many others that had not the courage or experience to resist their soft persuasive voices. It is so easy to go with the crowd.

Let it once be whispered around that so and so many books were stolen from the public library last year and are expected to be stolen every year, but the librarian considers it a matter of little consequence, hardly worth mentioning, and the inevitable conclusion will be, by many at least, that the theft of public property is not considered so culpable a thing after all as they were taught at Sunday school. Does not this look a little like encouraging and conniving at theft? And can your most expert accountant figure out how far this virus may spread through the body politic, how much harm it may do in deadening

that keen sense of honesty which society, by a hundred different means, is striving to inculcate in the minds of the rising generation? To hold out opportunities for theft is a crime—to invite it, to condone it, and by one of our great educational institutions, is monstrous. I cannot think it is for this that the free public library is supported by a generous and confiding people.

I find few inventories mentioned in annual reports. Are they afraid of the revelations an inventory would make? Is it harder to take an inventory of 150,000 books than of \$150,000 worth of stock in a wholesale hardware, grocery, or drug store?

But enough of this, may I tell you how we do in Peoria and, as I have lately learned, in Denver, also, after that fine library had been pretty well riddled and ripped up the back for several years by the best and brightest open shelf lunatic in our entire sisterhood. (I mention no names lest two others of my best friends should feel hurt at not being included)

With a present library of 100,000 volumes and a stack room capacity for 200,000, we keep our books in a carefully classified order on the shelves in the stack room immediately behind the long delivery counter. On this counter you will find a few, some 40 or 50, of the late novels, books that are skimmed to-day and skimmed milk to-morrow, but if you want a really good novel or any of the classified books it is back in its proper place in the stack room and our assistants will hand it to you in a minute, or, according to tests made, at the rate of three a minute on an average.

In an open case adjoining our delivery counter, immediately under the eye of all our assistants we keep some 600 volumes of the latest works in the different classes—theology, philosophy, history, biography, science, travel. This much we yield to the open shelf idea and it satisfies our people. Of course we have thieves too like other folks, but we acknowledge it before the event. In ample cases around our reading room are 18 different sets of cyclopedias

and dictionaries and large works of reference, many. In our closed children's room at the far end of our reading room, entering and leaving by a single wicket, we have some 6,000 volumes of juvenile literature of all classes and all accessible on open shelves, under the watchful guardianship of an experienced children's librarian. This I approve of. The child who as yet has no faintest idea of what is to be found in books outside of school books, makes here his first acquaintance with that boundless world. A few years later he will know what he wants and ask for it.

But in addition to this if any person whatever desires to gratify his curiosity by a sight of what we have behind those walls in our stack room, he is at once shown through the whole wilderness of books, and if he is pursuing some special object and wishes to spend some time in his chosen department we cheerfully bring him of our best, or we give him a chair and table by his books and leave him by himself. One visit satisfies his curiosity and after that he finds himself much better served, just as I am, by the attendants.

It has a rather catchy sound to say that the only school for the voter is the ballot box and the way to teach the people how to use the public library is to give them the public library to use, but I had supposed that a schooling of, at least five years in the language, laws and customs of the country was required of foreign born adults before admitting them to the ballot box, and 21 years for native born.

So, for our public, who seldom wants more than one or two books at a time, it is hardly necessary to teach them, at such cost, how to use and handle a hundred thousand volumes. That is what librarians and their assistants only learn after years of practice.

For, after all, the real test of the usefulness of a library lies in its ability not only to hand out the latest new novel promptly, but, far more exacting than that, to answer every reasonable demand made upon it for the latest, most reliable information on the ten thousand different sub-

jects of human inquiry constantly arising. This means labor, it means study, it means foresight and preparation in the supplying of books, and, not one whit less, does it mean intelligence, experience and quick responsive knowledge on the part of the assistant at the delivery desk.

The PRESIDENT: It was expected that we would be able to have a considerable discussion of this matter in the Association but time presses so that we can allow but a few minutes for this purpose. I will, however, ask for two minute talks, to last not more than 10 or 15 minutes altogether, and shall be very glad if anyone who is interested will let us hear what he thinks about this.

Mr HILL: Mr President, Mr Willcox did not tell us anything about the losses in his library where they have almost altogether closed shelves. I would like to ask two questions—(1) how many books he loses in the course of a year, and how his circulation compares with libraries having open shelves; (2) what his losses are in the children's room?

Mr WILLCOX: As to the children's room, we have never kept that separate until recently; we shall know better at the next inventory, and I couldn't answer that question except by referring back. On account of repairs in the library, a new story of stacks being put up, we could not take our usual biennial inventory year before last, but last year, when we took it, it was for three years. Our losses were just a little under 300 volumes for the three years. As to our losses of books that were charged and not collected, not returned nor paid for, I think we have lost about on an average six a year. In this case where I ran up from 110 to 2,041, our losses average about six a year because there will be some—there is no denying the fact that we have thieves, and I had to guard against them the best I could.

Miss LORD: If Mr Willcox will let me, I will state the losses of the Peoria public library in the way I stated the others.

The Peoria public library lost five volumes to every 10,000 circulated during the three-year period.

Mr HILL: Perhaps then, Mr President, Miss Lord could answer the other question, how that compares in proportion to libraries of the same size having open shelves.

Mr WILLCOX: Yes, let Miss Lord—I would rather hear Miss Lord every time.

Miss LORD: I can give you that class in which Peoria comes. It is this: over 25,000 and under 100,000 the open shelf libraries lost as follows: to every 10,000, 48, 17, 39, 8, 15, 7, 6, and Peoria with closed shelves lost 5. These are arranged according to population.

Mr HILL: Mr President, if my two minutes are not up I would merely like to say that we cannot measure the benefit of the open shelf system by any money value. The benefit comes from the greater use and larger circulation of books among people who have the opportunity to come to the library and see the books that they want to choose or that they want to take home for their own reading or for study there. That is the only point of vantage that I think we have.

Mr CUTTER: It may interest the Association to know that when I first took charge of the Forbes library the shelves were separated from the public by the charging desk, with only a narrow opening. In connection with another matter, the charging desk was moved, giving absolutely free access. The circulation of fiction decreased 20,000 the next year, and the circulation of non-fiction increased by about 10,000. Part of the decrease was due to the restricted purchase of new fiction, part to the free access to the non-fiction.

Mr ANDREWS: To my mind the question of mutilations is really fully as serious. I could not agree with Miss Lord at all in considering it insignificant in comparison with the losses. Especially in a reference library is that true. There is one other point I would like to bring out. Are we ourselves wholly guiltless in this matter? When we are borrowers from



other libraries do we take prompt pains to return exactly in condition with the lines--

Mr HILL: Yes.

Mr ANDREWS: I fear not. And I think it is for us to be careful before our open skirts are cleared in this matter.

Mr BOWERMAN: I wish Miss Lord could also have taken into account the element of the qualitative value of circulation, making comparisons between a closed and an open shelf library, as to the percentage of fiction. In 1904 in the Washington public library the only thing on open shelves was fiction. The percentage of fiction was 84 for the reason that people could not get at anything but fiction. In their despair, after waiting a long time to get any other kind of a book, they would take a book of fiction and go away with it. Consequently the fiction circulation was high. In the first two years after we began to put some of the classed books on open shelves the circulation increased to 155,000; 55,000 only of that increase was fiction; 100,000 of it was non-fiction. The library was not made entirely open shelf; but one class after another was placed on open shelves and after four years of having something besides fiction on open shelves, the percent of fiction circulated has fallen from 84 to 65.

The PRESIDENT: Mr Willcox in what he has said intimated that the library at Los Angeles was about to follow the lead of the Denver library and close its shelves. Can't we hear from Mr Lummis?

Mr LUMMIS: Mr Chairman. The Los Angeles public library is going to make as good a compromise as it can, but it is going to close its shelves as much as it must. When I went in there I found that the inventory, that useful tool which Mr Willcox mentioned, was not very seriously taken and we were all equally surprised to find that our actual losses amounted to over 4,000 books a year. Those were largely the less valuable books. In our reference department we lose very little—an average of perhaps 20 a year, but there we suffer frightful mutilation. Some of our most valuable art books have been depleted of their plates; books of five or ten

volumes have been destroyed as to their value as a set. The heaviest losses come in the general literature room where they average about 1600 a year; the next in the juvenile, the next in the fiction, where they average about 1450 a year. The juvenile and fiction are now on closed shelves; the general literature is closed, that is, nominally. We have a cord strung along, head high, and nice signs stating that "An attendant will bring you what you wish." In new quarters, to which I shall move in August, I hope, I am going to have a stack room and every book will be on the stack except books that are either too heavy to be carried off, or that can be trusted in place and accessible, because they are right under the eye of an attendant. In the general literature room I shall let the people look at the books but not reach them. There will be a desk running along 30 inches from the shelf, which will contain about 16,000 volumes, and there they can look at the beautiful books and get all that education and still can't tuck the books under their coat; an attendant will hand them out promptly. They won't have to wait long, and they can educate their minds by seeing the titles, but we are going on the general principle of protecting that property, on the principle that the library is business and no business can suffer loss amounting to nearly 20% per annum.

The PRESIDENT: I am sorry that this very interesting discussion must be brought to a close, but we have no more time for anything else in this line, especially because we have something not on the program, that I am sure will be interesting to you. At the Portland conference we had a representative from the Public Library in Honolulu. Now we are going still farther across the Pacific; we have with us to-day the librarian of the American Library, Manila, P. I., and I am going to ask Miss SYRENA McKEE to speak to us of

#### THE AMERICAN CIRCULATING LIBRARY OF MANILA

No doubt many attending these meetings remember the urgent plea for books "for